

THE VERY BOLD PROPHECY

NO. 1919

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 12, 1886,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*"I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not:
I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name."
Isaiah 65:1.*

THIS is the passage which was quoted by the apostle Paul in the tenth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. At the twentieth verse of that chapter he says—"Isaiah is very bold, and says, I was found of them that sought Me not; I was made manifest unto them that asked not after Me. But to Israel He says, All day long I have stretched forth My hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The apostle followed the Septuagint translation, but altered the position of the clauses.

We learn on inspired authority that this is a very bold passage, it required much courage to utter it at the first, and in Paul's day it needed still more to quote it and press it home upon the Jews around him. He who protests against a self-righteous people, and angers them by showing that others whom they despised are saved while they themselves are being lost, will have need of a dauntless spirit. The Israelite people thought that they had a monopoly on the grace of God, that the Lord who had chosen their fathers, and had indulged them with a divine revelation, would never deprive them of their advantages, nor advance others to the same privileges. They dreamed that God was almost bound to bless them above all the nations that were upon the face of the earth. To meet this national conceit with plain rebuke needed one who was very bold. When Paul spoke of his own mission to the Gentiles, the Jews lifted up their voices, and cried out, "Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live." The apostle, therefore, knew that Isaiah was very bold when in former ages he made Israel know that God would save a people who were not called by His name, while the favored people would die in their sins because they would not listen to the entreaties of their God. It becomes the servants of God to be bold in rebuking sin and protesting against pride, indeed, in all their messages it behooves them to be fearless. They do not deliver their own words, otherwise they might apologize for their speech, they speak the words of the living God, and it is not for them, for fear of feeble men, to soften their words and smooth their tongues. Ah, no! He that is ashamed to speak the truth has need to be ashamed of himself. It is treason against the King of kings to tone down the word of the Lord. Surely, among all cowards he is the worst who is afraid to be true to God. Such preachers must be especially pointed at in the text, "But the fearful and unbelieving shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone: which is the second death."

This text has the clear ring of free grace about it, and for this reason it may be called bold. He had need be bold who in this day would preach fully and plainly the doctrine of the sovereign grace of God. This cultured age repudiates the doctrines of grace, which are the heart of evangelical teaching. Men are vexed when we declare that God is first in human salvation, and seeks men before they seek Him. Many grow red in the face if we testify that the Lord, in His gracious sovereignty meets with persons who have never sought Him, and brings them to Himself, changing their hearts by His own eternal Spirit, while He leaves others to perish in their sins because they resist His Spirit, and refuse the invitations of His mercy. Yet we shall not cease most joyfully to sing unto our God—

*"No sinner can be beforehand with Thee;
Your grace is most sovereign, most rich, and most free."*

While many who have heard the gospel from their childhood continue to hear it in vain, others who have never heard it before are brought by what are commonly called accidental circumstances to hear the quickening word, and at once they embrace it and live. My prayer has been that this morning our text may be again fulfilled. May the Lord be sought by those who until now have not inquired for Him! May many who have strayed into this place thoughtlessly find Jesus this day! It may be, you are unused to divine things, unaccustomed to the gracious commands of love which bid you trust in Jesus, oh that you may at once be convinced, converted, renewed and saved! While the Lord Jesus at this hour calls to you, "Behold Me, behold Me," I trust you will be made to long, to look, to live, and to love. Truly it will be a wonder of grace, but our Lord is the God of wonders, His name is Wonderful. May He get to Himself great renown throughout eternity by being found this day by those who sought Him not! While I am preaching I shall be praying in the Holy Spirit that this word of the Lord may be carried out most evidently in the midst of this assembly.

I shall ask your earnest attention at once to the text, in which there are four notable things: *the personality of God in the work of grace; His delight in it; the description which He gives of it; and the purposes which He would serve by that description.* May the Holy Spirit help us in this four-fold meditation!

I. The first point for your consideration is THE PERSONALITY OF GOD IN THE WORK OF HIS GRACE. This is remarkably prominent in the words before us. Let me read them, and lay the emphasis upon the personal pronouns which relate to God. "I was sought of them that asked not for *Me*; I am found of them that sought *Me* not; I said, Behold *Me*, behold *Me*, unto a nation that was not called by *My* name." Is not the Lord here, not only as speaker, but as the theme of His own speech? It is most surely and emphatically true that God is present in the works of His grace. He operates upon the heart personally and not alone by second causes. He works in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. He is personally operative as well as personally observant of everything gracious.

The philosophy now in vogue labors to shut God out of His own creation. They inform us that by some means this world and all that is therein were evolved. Even this will not long content the men of progress; they care nothing for evolution in itself, but only so far as it may serve their purpose of escaping from the thought of God. If by some method or other vain men could scheme a world without a God, they would be delighted, and that philosopher who comes nearest to the invention of a subtle lie which will justify their forgetfulness of God is the prince of the hour, the favorite of his age. Yes, God must be obliterated somehow, for "the fool has said in his heart, There is no God."

These wise men would have done with God also in the ruling and overruling of providence; according to the modern notion, the universe is like a watch which goes because it has been wound up long ago. It is not even admitted that there was a God to wind it up, but anyhow, if there is such a great personal power, He has put the watch under His pillow, and has gone to sleep while the machine goes on ticking without Him. Certain fixed laws operate without any force at their back, and the world is so self-contained that it goes on by itself without God, this is the modern idea. They have no one to wind up this watch again when it runs down—no prospect of new heavens and a new earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell. Those who would get rid of God out of nature and providence have tried their hands at making a religion without God, and a pretty religion it is!—it is too small a business to need consideration. Those of us who rejoice to see the Lord both in creation and in providence know assuredly that He is most conspicuous in the kingdom of grace. There He is the first and the last, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. The Lord God in Christ Jesus is the sum and substance of salvation, to Him we look, in Him we find all things, by Him we come to Him, and He is our all in all. God gives freely to those who have hitherto been far off from Him that salvation of which Jonah said, "Salvation is of the Lord." Human salvations are the wages of works; divine salvation is the gift of grace.

Notice that in the text the personality of God comes forth in that *He Himself is observant of all that is done.* Do any seek Him?—He says, "I am sought." Do any find Him?—he says, "I am found." Is there any preaching of the gospel?—the Lord declares, "I said, Behold Me, behold Me." God takes note of it all. Not a prayer is breathed, nor a sigh heaved, nor a note of praise uttered from the heart, but what the omniscient Lord has noted every thought. That eye which behold microscopic life in the lowest depths of the sea, and traces the flight of the condor in its utmost height, spies out the most sorrowful anguish of

seeking souls, and observes the most elevated joy of souls that find their God. Grace in its beginnings, its growings, its declinings, its increasings, and its struggles, is ever under the divine eye. At this moment God's omnipresent heart beats in sympathy with all our hearts, if we are seeking His love. You have not to apprise Him that you are seeking, He perceives your secret thoughts, and meets you in your return to Him. "Behold he prays" is God's immediate expression concerning you if you begin to pray at this hour. If you dart a glance of faith to the Lord Jesus He will at once yield to you and say, "I am found." The Lord's eye is on the heart which feels His grace.

Further, God's personality in the work of grace is conspicuous, because *He Himself is the great object of desire where grace is in operation*. When men are savingly awakened, they seek—what? Religion? By no means. They seek God, if they seek aright. We hear sometimes the saying that such a one has "found religion." Do not use the expression, it is a vain one. That which men find when they find peace and eternal life is God Himself. The Lord says, "I am found." If men do not find God they have found nothing.

God Himself fills the vision of faith, observe the words, "Behold Me, behold Me." We look to God in Christ, and find all that our soul needs. If any man is saved, it will be through looking to God, as it is written, "They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed." O my hearer, behold your God! Would you have pardon for sin? Seek God in Christ Jesus. Would you have renewal of heart? Seek God the Holy Spirit, by whom alone we are born again. Would you be God's child? Receive Jesus, for "to as many as received Him, to them gave He power" (or authority) "to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." God is the sum of our necessities. God we seek as sinners, God we find as saints. I have sometimes put it thus to you—Here is a little child picked from the gutter, it is starved, unclothed, unwashed, and deathly sick. What does it need? Well, it would take me a long time to write out a list of all its needs. It needs washing, clothing, warming, feeding, nursing, loving—no, I will not attempt to complete the catalog, but I will tell you all in a word: this little child wants *its mother*. If it finds a loving and capable mother, it has all that it needs at once. Every lost soul of man needs a thousand things, but no soul needs more than it will find in God. The lost prodigal needs bread, and a host of other things, but he finds all when he carries out the resolve, "I will arise and go to my Father." It is therefore beautifully evident that God displays His personality in grace, since He is Himself that which the soul seeks, and finds, and rejoices in. "He that is our God is the God of salvation." Yes, more, as Isaiah puts it in his twelfth chapter, "Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation."

The loving personality of God comes out in the work of grace, in that *He Himself is the speaker of that call by which men are saved*. Here are the words: "*I said, Behold Me, behold Me.*" The Lord Himself speaks the effectual word. Did not Isaiah proclaim the gospel? Yes, he did, and this was the result of Isaiah's speech, "Who has believed our report?" But when God's arm is revealed, so that God speaks through His prophet, then a very different result follows, for God's word shall not return unto Him void, but it shall prosper in the thing whereto He sent it. Dear soul, if you have looked to Christ, it is because Christ has looked at you, and influenced you to look to Him. If there is any glancing of the eye even of the feeblest faith towards God, it is because He has said by His Spirit, "Look unto Me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else." I like to think of the gospel as not only prepared and revealed by God, but as actually spoken by Himself into the ear and heart of the man to whom it becomes the power of God unto salvation. You have never heard a living word yet, my brother, a really living, quickening word from my lips alone, it may have come, perhaps, through my mouth as the vocal organ, but if it is a quickening word it must have come from God Himself. Man's words are mere breath, but the word of the Lord is spirit and life. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made," and all heavenly things come from the same source. Praise you, then, the blessed God, who thus personally appears in the conversion of everyone who is led to seek and find his God. It is no wonder that He is found of those who sought Him not, when He Himself comes forth to reveal Himself to men.

Moreover, God is seen in the work of grace, for *He Himself is the director of the message*. "I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation that was not called by My name" Not only does God speak the gospel, but He speaks it home to those whom He appoints to hear it. We who preach know not to whom the truth will be applied. I speak unto this crowd this day as I am called to do, in so doing I scatter handfuls of

heavenly seed, but how do I know where it shall fall? God's eternal purpose carries every single grain of the good seed into the furrow which He has prepared for it. Very marvelous is it how the Lord prepares the ground for the seed and the seed for the ground. Of late, Thursday night after Thursday night I have had singularly striking proofs of this. Letters have come again and again of this character: "I felt drawn to attend the Tabernacle from a notice in the paper, but I shall never forget the words which I then heard, for they were evidently meant for me." Then the person goes on to detail certain circumstances of his life which have corresponded, with remarkable minuteness, to observations made in the sermon. How is this? The preacher knew nothing of the matter, and yet the word fitted like a glove to the hand. Nor is this all, for, strange to tell, the message has seemed equally personal to another individual, whose circumstances were of another order. God's word has many operations, and what to one is an appropriate word of encouragement, may be to another an equally suitable word of rebuke. He can kill and cure by the same word. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. If the preaching of the gospel is but a human act, it would produce human results, and there it would end, but if God Himself speaks by His servant and directs His word by His own power, then the divine agency will produce divine results to the praise of the glory of His grace. In the kingdom of grace the word of God is a manifestation of God; by it He works in the new creation even as He did in the old. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God." I call upon you, therefore, beloved, to rejoice that God comes very near to us in the work of grace, and is made known to us as our God.

This surrounds the gospel with a strange solemnity. If the gospel blesses us, it is not *it*, but God that blesses; God Himself has come to us. Yet remember that this fact has another aspect to it, for if the gospel is rejected, it is God that is rejected. Read the next verse, "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people." Yes, if you accept the gospel you have found your God, but if you reject the gospel you have rejected God Himself. The gospel may be brought to you by the poorest of my Master's servants, but since it is God's own message of love, in refusing it you refuse your God. It is true that the hands which were stretched out to you were human, and therefore you criticized the style of the invitation, and perhaps refused it with scorn, but at the back of the feeble ambassador stood the great King, and behind the simple invitation was the sublime mind of God. He takes it ill that you refuse His message, seeing that in so doing you refuse Him that spoke from heaven. Oh, how differently would some of you hear if you did but remember that in the gospel God Himself in person comes to you! Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have come to pleading terms with you; will you, can you, turn a deaf ear to the Sacred Trinity?

II. But now, secondly, dear friends, in the text I see THE DELIGHT WHICH GOD TAKES IN THE WORK OF GRACE. The text is the utterance of delight. God is glad to be sought and found by those who once were negligent of Him.

It is evident that *He rejoices in contrast to the complaint of the next verse*. It is with joy that God says, "I am sought of them that asked not for Me; I am found of them that sought Me not," for it is placed in opposition to the mournful notes in which the Lord says, "I have spread out My hands all the day unto a rebellious people." We speak of God after the manner of men, for so God speaks of Himself. It is true, then, that He is hurt and grieved when He stretches out His hands in vain. We read of some of old that, "They vexed His Holy Spirit." Frequently are similar expressions used in Scripture. When His kindness is rejected God is grieved. Listen to His cry, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord has spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." As a relief to such a lamentation this verse has in it a true joy, an intensity of satisfaction, because some are coming to peace and love. God speaks it with pleasure, "I am found of them that sought Me not." Do not forget that utterance, "As I live, says the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dies, but that he turn unto Me and live." It gives God pleasure to see men turn to Him. Infinitely happy as He must be from His own glorious nature, yet there is a joy which only He feels when He is sought after and found by the sons of men, and this becomes special when the most unlikely ones are seeking and finding. God is gladdest when He says, "Behold Me, behold Me," unto a nation that was not called by His name.

The Lord rejoices in each step of the process. There is a poor soul beginning to cry, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him!" and lo, the Lord says, "I am sought." A man has only just begun to attend the

House of Prayer; he has only lately commenced the earnest study of the Bible; the Lord sees it, and He says, "I am sought." As when a fisherman smiles because a fish has begun to nibble at the bait, so the Lord notes the first movings of the heart towards Himself, and He says, "I am sought." It was but a poor little prayer you prayed last night, you started up from your knees astonished to find that you had actually been attempting to pray, but your heavenly Father saw you, and He said with pleasure, "I am sought." "When he was yet a great way off his Father saw him." Behold the infinite compassion of the all-observing God!

The very next sentence is, "I am found." What a delight it must be to God's heart when at last the poor sinner cries, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" Then Jesus says, "I am found." Do not imagine that a soul ever found the great Father without the great Father's knowing it. There is a consciousness of joy in us when we can say, "I found Him whom my soul loves," but there is a greater and fuller consciousness on the part of Him whom we have found when He declares, in the words of the text, "I am found." God rejoices when He is sought and when He is found! Oh do not think that you seek an unwilling God. He comes to meet you; He falls upon your neck and kisses you. Whatever you do in coming to God, He views it with infinite pleasure.

The Lord also rejoices in the persons who seek Him. He says, "I am sought of them that asked not for Me." God takes special joy in being sought by those who formerly did not seek Him. He will be glad for any heart to keep on seeking that has begun to seek, but He is best pleased when non-seekers become seekers. You that were taught to pray at your mother's knee, God is glad to hear your sincere petitions, but if there is a man here who has never prayed before in their life, let him begin at once, and the Lord will rejoice to hear him. Has your mind never thrilled with the holy desire to seek your Creator, Preserver, and Friend? Have you been careless and godless? Then turn to Him at once, and He will delight in having mercy upon you. Oh come, you giddy ones, and seek Him whom you have never asked for. Come, you thoughtless ones, and find Him whom you have never sought. Come, you who have never called upon the sacred name, and behold your God, your Savior. This is the good pleasure of God, His purpose, and His promise to His Son, "Behold, You shall call a nation that You know not, and nations that knew You not shall run unto You because of the Lord Your God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for He has glorified You."

"Alas!" says one, "I have never sought Him!" Yet you may find Him, for the word of the Lord is, "I am found of them that sought Me not." Our Savior tells us of a merchant of earnest spirit who went out to seek goodly pearls. He traversed many lands inspecting a variety of jewels that he might find one especially precious pearl, and at last he found it, and bought it. They that seek the Lord shall find Him. But there was another man whose mind sought after less ambitious matters, he was of the earth earthy. He yoked his bullocks one morning to the plow, and he was thinking only of his clods and of his fields, when, all of a sudden, the plow made a stop, there was something in the way. He stopped the oxen, he examined the ground; he dug in the earth. He came to an old crock, and in that crock he found a treasure of gold and of silver. He had found what he never looked for, and the moment he found it he decided to sell all that he had, and buy the field, that he might possess the treasure. My hearer, you came to London on pleasure, or on business, or to see the Exhibition, you certainly did not come with the expectation of finding Christ and eternal life. I hope you have stumbled on full salvation at this moment. Happiness and heaven lie before you, will you not have them? The plow has struck on the hidden treasure of the blessed gospel, and if you will stoop down and look, here are riches such as you never dreamed of. I pray that God the Holy Spirit may so sweetly influence your heart that you may resolve to have Jesus at any price, and give up all that you have of sin or self-righteousness in order to possess Him. Come to Jesus just as you are, and receive at once His full salvation. If you do that, God will rejoice over you. Not only will we be glad, who are His servants on earth, and angels who are His servants in heaven, but Father, Son, and Holy Spirit will rejoice over you. The Lord will say, "I am found of them that sought Me not."

I rejoice to have such a text to preach from. Oh that many of you who are wicked, careless, graceless men may find God at once, and thus set all heaven's bells a-ringing for joy!

The Lord rejoices in the numbers who seek Him and find Him. "I said, Behold Me, behold Me, unto a nation." When shall the day come that nations shall be born at once? We want to see tens of thousands

brought to Jesus. If you all come, the gate of mercy is wide enough for you, and God will be glorified in your coming, yes, His sacred heart will be glad as He sees you running to Him. Draw them, sweet Spirit. Draw all London to Jesus! Draw all England to Jesus! Draw the world to Jesus! For Your love's sake do this, we beseech You.

III. Now we have a third matter to consider, and that is—THE DESCRIPTION WHICH GOD HIMSELF GIVES OF THE WORK OF GRACE. Time flies too quickly, therefore let me give you only rough hints, instead of full instructions. This verse is a little Bible. Here you have the experience of salvation described.

The Lord tells us where He finds the objects of His grace. He says, "They asked not for Me; they sought Me not; they were not called by My name." In the Book of Hosea, we read that they were not His people. These are the careless and senseless beings, whom the Lord called by His grace. He manifested great love to us when we were dead in trespasses and sins. By nature we are so much worthless clay, and we must owe all to the Potter's hands if we ever become vessels fit for the Master's use. When there is no good thought, nor wish, nor desire, in us, then God comes to us in abounding love. What a mercy it is that He comes to us in our sin and misery, for assuredly we should not otherwise come to Him. Remember the description which the Lord gives of His Israel as a helpless infant, which had never been washed, or swaddled, or cared for, but was cast out in the open field, with no eye to pity it? Then it is written, "And when I passed by you, and saw you polluted in your own blood, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live; yes, I said unto you when you were in your blood, Live." Beloved, we are in the same condition by nature, without life, or power, or goodness, or anything that can commend us to God, and it is then that the Lord comes to us and deals with us in grace, causing us to seek and find Him. Oh, the splendor of the grace of God!

Having told us where we were, He next describes *that gospel which comes to them* as the power of God. Here are His own words, "I said, Behold Me, behold Me." If anybody were to ask me to state the gospel in a few words I should answer—the Lord says, "Behold Me, behold Me." The way of salvation is, "Look unto Me and be you saved, all the ends of the earth." Christ on the cross cries to the guilty sinner, "Behold the Lamb of God." To encourage a trembling soul to behold Him with steadfast hope the Lord says twice, "Behold Me, behold Me." Does any sinner exclaim, "But Lord, I am so filthy?" Do not look at yourself, "Behold Me; for I can cleanse you." "But Lord, I am death itself." Do not look at your own death. Behold Me, for I am the resurrection and the life, "But, Lord, the more I look at myself the more I despair." Then do not look at yourself, but look to Me alone. Behold Me, and then behold Me again and again, and keep on beholding Me till your heart finds perfect rest. Look to Jesus, as God is in Him revealed as your Savior and your all. Behold your King is also your sacrifice. You can be justified through Him by whom you shall be judged at the last great day. In this verse our Lord seems delighted to declare that blessed gospel which is the two-edged sword of His grace. Hear it, you sinners! Hear it, and obey it at once! What! Will you not look? Do you deny your Lord a look? Shall God cry, "Behold Me," and will you hide your faces from Him? I trust that some who never knew the gospel before will at this instant behold the Lamb of God. Look to your bleeding Savior, your forgiving God. Look and live.

Then the Lord goes on to mention *the converts which the gospel makes*. The careless become seekers, the ungodly become finders, the prayerless behold their God and live. Sinners who never sought Him hear this gospel and rejoice in its glad tidings. Herein is joy.

The Lord also describes *the experience of the saved*. They asked not for Him before, but now they seek after God. This is the first work of grace—to make us seek grace. God comes to us that we may come to Him. Under a sense of need, driven by a gracious hunger, men seek for God as for bread and water. Are any of you eager for the living God? This is God's finger upon you. He has made you now to desire that which once you had no care for, and you ought to praise Him for this. Quick upon the seeking comes the finding. There is only a semicolon in our text between "I am sought," and "I am found." If you truly seek the Lord, you shall soon find Him, even though for years you have been negligent of the great salvation. I say not that if you seek this or that you shall find it, but if you seek the Lord He will be found of you. He has promised it, and He will make it good. He is to be found of all them that earnestly desire Him, and the finding frequently follows quick upon the seeking.

I think I may say of this description of the way of salvation, how simple it is! God seeks the sinner, the sinner seeks his God. The sinner finds his God because God has found the sinner, and it is all done. Intricacies and difficulties are at an end; believe and live is simplicity itself. "Oh, but," says one, "there must be a deal of preparation before I who seek God can hope to find Him." There needs no preparation. He says, "Seek you My face" and if your heart says, "Your face, Lord, will I seek," the Lord is near unto you at once. "But surely, sir, I shall have to feel, I shall have to learn, I shall have to do." Oh, yes, you shall have all that by and by, but as to salvation, you may have it at once, there is no need of an hour's delay; behold your God and live. Salvation lies in your finding Him who now displays Himself in the gospel of His Son. Seeking and finding are wrapped up together in this one word, "Behold Me, behold Me." Looking is a kind of blended seeking and finding. We look *for* salvation by looking *to* Jesus. Looking to Christ, we have Christ. We seek Him by an act of faith which finds Him. The desire and its fulfillment dwell together in that one word "look." Oh, I wish I knew how this morning to speak as I should speak about this plain way, this road which the wayfaring man may so readily follow, this method which is as gracious as the blessing to which it leads. Before I knew the Lord Jesus and His cross I used to fancy that there was some great mystery about faith, and poor soul that I was, I feared that I should never be able to understand and enjoy it; but I heard a simple working man say, "Look to Jesus, look and live," and I was not disobedient to the message. I trusted Jesus, and I lived. I gave up trying to understand, I believed, and I lived. I would to God that I could slay all the artful doubts and questions which disturb poor sinners' brains, and harden their hearts. O friends, be wise enough to be fools, and accept Jesus to be your wisdom. Be children and sit down and let the Lord Jesus teach you. Take what He tells you to be true, and never doubt again. Trust! That is all. Look to God for everything, and you are saved.

See how God, who delights in the gospel of His grace, thus gives us in this verse a clear and succinct account of the whole process of salvation. May He write it out large on our hearts by His Spirit!

IV. I conclude with the fourth point, which is this—THE USE WHICH GOD MAKES OF ALL THIS. You see, dear friends, the Lord here took care that when He said, "I am sought of them that asked not for Me," His words should be written down, and that they should be made known to us. It is not everything that God may say to Himself that He will afterwards repeat to us, but here these private utterances of the divine heart are spoken out to us by Isaiah, and left on record in this inspired Book. To what end do you think it is so?

I think, first, that He may excite in us *wonder and admiration*. What a wonder it is that men and women who never had a thought about God but an aversion to Him, should, nevertheless, be turned into seekers! It is often so; there can be no doubt about it. Sudden conversions have not ceased. I knew a man, a singular person, but a sincere Christian, who, in his early days, never thought of going to any place of worship. One Sunday morning he set out to visit a comrade, intending to conclude a bargain which had been talked over the day before about a pair of ducks. He stepped into the meeting house, because it began to rain, and there he found what he had never sought. He never bought that pair of ducks; he forgot them, as the woman of Samaria forgot her water pot. The Lord met with him there and then, and he beheld his Savior. Many such things have happened in this house, and some such will occur this morning. Remember the famous Colonel Gardiner. He had made an appointment to commit a deed of wickedness, but reached the spot too soon, and while he waited he thought he saw the Savior on the cross, and heard Him say, "I have done all this for you; what have you ever done for Me?" He fled the place, he sought his own chamber, he cried to God, and Colonel Gardiner from being a wild soldier became a saint of God. Surely this is meant to make us reverently adore the Lord of grace. Oh to see the same today! Then shall we wonder and sing for joy. The Lord's grace is like the dew "that tarries not for man, nor waits for the sons of men." His effectual grace takes us by surprise and captures us by force of love—

"Thus the eternal council ran—

Almighty grace, arrest that man."

Then the man is arrested. He had no intent of being so, but the Divine Sheriff's officer laid his hand upon his shoulder and said, "You go no further, sir; you have been the enemy of God, you shall now become His friend," and it is so. "Well," says one, "have not men a free will?" Certainly, and the wonder is that free grace does not violate it, and yet the purpose of God is accomplished. Free will alone ruins men, but

free will guided by free grace is another matter. Lead free will captive to free grace and then it is freer than ever, and yet the will of the Lord is done. But it is God that does convert the sinner, and He does so that we may believe in the exceeding greatness of His grace. Many a time have the churches rejoiced because of great persecutors who have bowed before the cross, and become believers. I need not mention Saul of Tarsus, for he is only one among many. Among the chief of sinners the Lord has found earnest heralds of the gospel, who, by the very fact of their change, have been powerful living witnesses to the purifying power of the doctrine of faith.

Why does the Lord thus declare the conversion of those who were out of the way? I think it is *to destroy pride and self-esteem*. Some of you who are not converted are yet in your own esteem a cut above others. You have sittings in the Tabernacle, or else you attend at some thoroughly evangelical church, and you say to yourselves, "If anybody will get to heaven we shall, for we hear the pure word of God." You postpone repentance and put off the consideration of eternal things because you feel that you can secure salvation when it pleases you. What does God do? Why, He sends His gospel to the abandoned and fallen, and brings outcasts to Himself. He saves those whom you thought He had given over to their sins and you church-going and chapel-going people, who dream that you have a monopoly of privileges, are left to your own willfulness. God will pay no regard to caste. He is no respecter of persons, but calls whomsoever He wills, according to His royal word, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy." Pride of birth and education He thus casts to the ground.

He does it next, *to encourage you who are seeking Him*, for if those who do *not* seek Him often find Him, why, you that do seek Him are sure to find Him. If He is found of those who seek Him not, He will surely be found of those who are daily agonizing for Him. Do not believe that He will let you seek His face in vain. Come and believe on Him today, and He will then be found of you.

I think He does this *to encourage workers*. Go to work among the worst of the worst, for since God is found of those that seek Him not, there is hope for the vilest. None of your people are worse than those described in the text. O worker, you will gather precious pearls if you have but the courage to dive deep for them; doubtless the choicest pearls are hidden in the deepest seas. The Lord can bring to Himself infidels, thieves, harlots, blasphemers, and such like; let us not hesitate to go after them, nor fear that our labor will be lost.

The Lord magnifies His grace *that He may convict those who do not come to Him of the greatness of their sin*. Look, says He, those who never heard of Me before have found salvation, while you who have been instructed, and invited, and impressed, have still held out, and resisted My Spirit. You have been persuaded, entreated, prayed over, and wept over, and yet you have not come to Me. Who is to blame for this but yourselves? Your own hard hearts have robbed you of mercy. Publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before you because of your willful unbelief. Take heed, my hearers! Take heed lest you perish in sight of heaven. I pray you, for God's sake and your own soul's sake, awake to righteousness.

**PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—ISAIAH 65.
HYMNS FROM "OUR OWN HYMN BOOK"—166, 233, 235.**

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